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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

May 16, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I write in appreciation of the recent actions taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as part of the Biden Administration's efforts to address the nationwide shortage of infant formula in this country. Given that more than 40 percent of formulas are out of stock at stores, online marketplaces have become an important source for increasingly scarce baby formula. However, I remain concerned that low-income households that participate in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) are generally ineligible to use their benefits in online marketplaces. Not only does this inequitably inconvenience WIC participants, but it severely reduces the infant formula options that are available to them.

Since 1974, WIC has enhanced access to healthy foods and delivered critical nutrition services for new and expectant parents, babies, and young children. Through WIC, the U.S. government provides infant formula to almost half of all U.S. infants. Provision of infant formula through WIC helps to ensure that infants in low-income households receive adequate nutrition. However, there are many restrictions that limit what participants can purchase and where they can use their benefits. For example, online purchasing remains prohibited under WIC rules, and the regulations do not allow for transactions via a virtual platform.

I understand that the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is working with program stakeholders to make online ordering and transactions a reality for WIC participants. The proposed rule being developed would address key regulatory barriers to online ordering in WIC by making changes to the provisions that prevent online transactions and prevent certain types of online capable stores from participating in the program. I appreciate these efforts, but the families of America need access to all available modes of accessing infant formula now, including online and telephonic ordering, curbside pickup and payment, online and telephone purchasing, home delivery, and self-checkout.

Therefore, I respectfully request USDA to expeditiously issue regulations to modernize the shopping experience for WIC participants. Not only will this increase equity in the program by allowing participants to shop like all other shoppers, but it will most importantly give WIC participants greater access to an expanded supply of infant formula on online marketplaces.

I thank you for your continued attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Blunt Rochester". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being the most prominent.

LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER  
Member of Congress